

THE PRAYER MEETING.

The "church thermometer," as it is sometimes called, is as often the church problem. It is hardly fair to regard it as the indicator of the congregation's warmth or coldness. It is as frequently the indicator of the pastor's temperature. He has as much to do with its making as the people. Its success or failure turns on his treatment of it.

It is an undeniable fact that the prayer meeting is not as well sustained, in the vast majority of churches, as it should be; that its numbers are small; that it does not attract the kind of people who would be most benefitted by attendance upon its exercises; that it is upheld only by a very faithful few; that even those who attend it do not do so quite as much from interest and delight as from duty; that it is by too many regarded as a burden. This condition suggests certain inquiries.

How many ministers throw as much life and thought into the preparation for the mid-week meeting, and the conduct of it, as into the Sunday services? What care is taken to enlist workers for its choir, trained leaders for its prayers, occasional speakers who will be attractive for its addresses, and to devote thorough study and preparation to all its parts?

A long continued observation shows that as a rule this service is given the leavings and scraps. So few will be there, the preacher says, that he should not waste his best thought, the product of his severest mental toil, on that handful. Perhaps if he would do this a few times he would soon find that handful requiring a giant's palm to hold it, and very likely if he would do it long enough and persistently enough to convince the people of his purpose to make the meeting as good as any he holds, and to establish it as a fact, he would soon find that his crowd will not be measurable by handful, but by roomful.

The music should be as carefully looked after. It should not be allowed to become monotonous. Merely familiar hymns, like simple little "talks" from the pastor, given out just because they are familiar to the little company which is there, will prove no magnet to attract. The very delicate matter of the long-and-same-thing-every-time prayers need not be left untouched, if wisely and sympathetically handled, with a good example to give proper impulse and suggestion. By special arrangement beforehand, in naming themes for prayers and providing specially for them, even in holding if need be "training classes" in prayer, where men will learn to become familiar with their own voices and get into the way of talking and making petitions on special topics, the monotony and wearisomeness of the average leaders in prayer might be greatly changed, to their own great comfort and peace and to the greater pleasure and profit of the congregation.

There is no doubt but that the faithful few who do attend the prayer meeting, rain or shine, and be the meeting dull or life-like, dry or moving, are a blessing to the church of which they are members, and a joy to the pastor's heart. But why should not the blessing and the workers be enlarged? It can not be claimed by its most ardent supporters that the

prayer meeting's work is done when not one-third, or sometimes not one-tenth, of the people of the church have attended it and shown their faith by enduring its tedium. The meeting ought to be one for joy and growth, not for the testing of the believer's power of endurance and of self-denial. If made less monotonous, and if given life and movement and interest, it would, after awhile, command attention and attendance.

LOUISIANA AND THE SALOONS.

Of Louisiana's fifty-nine Parishes, thirty-three are "dry," counting in this list two which are all dry but one town in each. About three-quarters of the State's territory is dry, and over half the population is found in the dry territory. The Southern tier of Parishes, and those along the river, in all of which the Roman Catholic Church is dominant, and in some of which there is not a white Protestant church of any kind, are chiefly the ones where the liquor dealers hold the ground.

Some of the strongest advocates of prohibition, however, are found among the Roman Catholics, and some of the Parishes which have gone dry have a large Romanist population. One of the leaders, in the last session of the legislature, in the effort to secure complete prohibition was a Roman Catholic physician from one of the "wettest" parishes in the State. It is a very common belief that within a very few years the saloon business will be driven entirely out. Louisiana is beginning to realize that she cannot be the dumping ground for all her sister States near by.

PAUL AS A PREACHER.

Our recent studies in the Sunday-schools have brought out, more than any other single thing, the facts concerning Paul as a preacher. His purpose, method, adaptation, zeal, and wisdom have been constantly shown, and the results, too, of his preaching have been given.

In one place he is reported as being one of those who were turning the world "upside down," of which some one has remarked that it was a good thing to do if the world was wrong side up! He did not deny the charge that the new doctrines were revolutionary. He wishes to make a complete change in the people's thoughts and convictions. A ministry that is not thus revolutionary, in the best sense, is a poor ministry.

He was singularly tactful. The sermon on Mars Hill was as fine a piece of art, fitting all the surroundings, as rhetoric or dialectics have ever produced, in addition to its power and cogency as a plea for Christian faith. His discourse in Antioch in Pisidia, was also a masterpiece in its fitness to the people, time and place. Paul studied adaptation, and he made skilful use of conditions. He bent everything his own way, but so adroitly that his hearers were drawn almost without knowing it.

And yet Paul's sermons were not always immediately fruitful. Even following that splendid effort in Athens, but two people seem to have accepted the faith. Where the truth does not win, it enrages, if the mind recognizes it and conscience tells one to